
TEN YEAR PERSPECTIVE

This section provides a ten-year perspective on deaths investigated by the Medical Examiner and variation in data from year to year.

Approximately 48% (6,231/12,838)¹ of the deaths in King County were reported to the Medical Examiner in 1998. The Medical Examiner's Office, however, did not assume responsibility for certification in all of these deaths. In about 76% (4,724/6,231) of these deaths, the Medical Examiner did not assume jurisdiction and perform an investigation; instead a No Jurisdiction Assumed (NJA) number was assigned. In such instances a physician with knowledge and awareness of the deceased's state of health certified death. These are primarily natural deaths, with a predominance of individuals in nursing homes with a known fatal disease process. Thus, the Medical Examiner assumed jurisdiction in 12% (1,507/12,838) of deaths that occurred in King County in 1998²

The tables on the following pages attempt to give a perspective on the types of deaths investigated by the Medical Examiner. The tables display data by category and year and provide trends over time. More detailed analysis of 1998 data is provided in separate sections for each manner of death (Accident, Homicide, Natural, Suicide, Traffic, Undetermined).

For an additional perspective of the past ten years, please note Graph 9-1, page 88, entitled "Drug/Poison Caused Deaths, 1989 - 1998".

¹Death certificates filed in King County

²Does not include non-human or archeological remains or contract cases.

Table 2-1 Comparison of Manners of Death, 1989 - 1998

MANNER OF DEATH	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Accident	296	294	288	335	337	358	352	415	434	427
Homicide	72	90	82	119	126	118	100	88	97	90
Natural	587	642	540	525	594	569	591	558	518	529
Suicide	206	216	197	208	216	216	218	238	188	201
Traffic	201	239	193	179	166	178	182	205	216	199
Undet.	67	69	51	39	42	62	61	54	38	61
Total	1429	1551	1351	1405	1481	1501	1504	1558	1491	1507

Table 2-2 Comparison of Manners of Death as Percentage of Total Annual Medical Examiner Cases, 1989 - 1998

MANNER OF DEATH	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Accident	20.7	18.9	21.3	23.8	22.8	23.8	23.4	26.6	29.1	28.3
Homicide	5.0	5.9	6.1	8.5	8.5	7.9	6.6	5.6	6.5	6.1
Natural	41.1	41.4	40.0	37.4	40.1	37.9	39.3	35.8	34.7	35.1
Suicide	14.4	13.9	14.6	14.8	14.6	14.4	14.5	15.2	12.6	13.3
Traffic	14.1	15.4	14.3	12.7	12.7	11.9	12.1	13.1	14.5	13.2
Undet.	4.7	4.4	3.8	2.8	2.8	4.1	4.1	3.4	2.5	4.0

Graph 2-1 Comparison of Manners of Death, 1989 – 1998

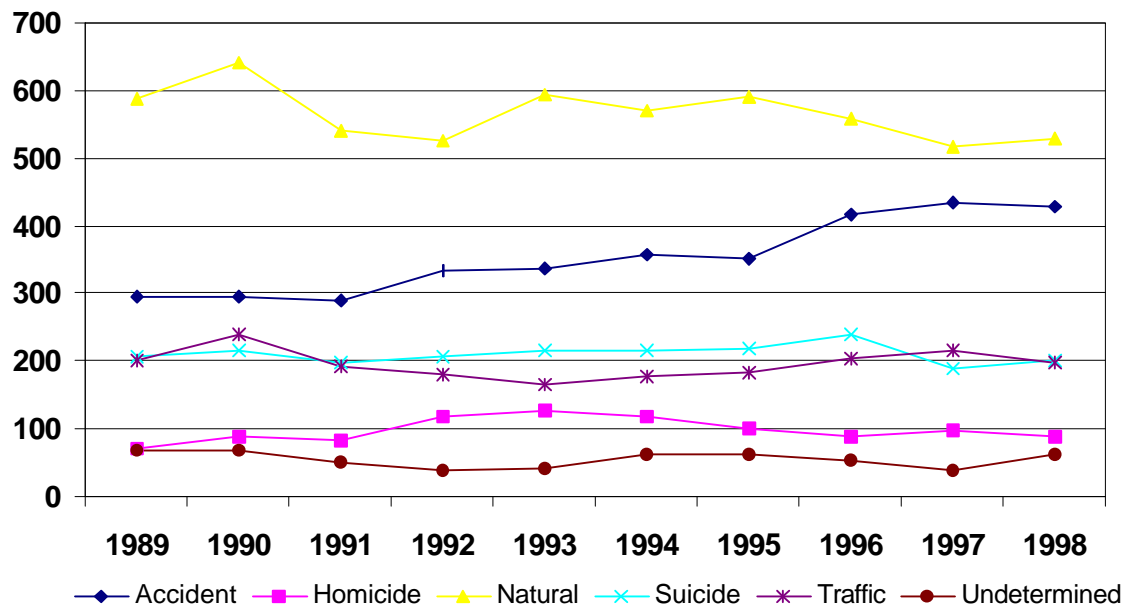
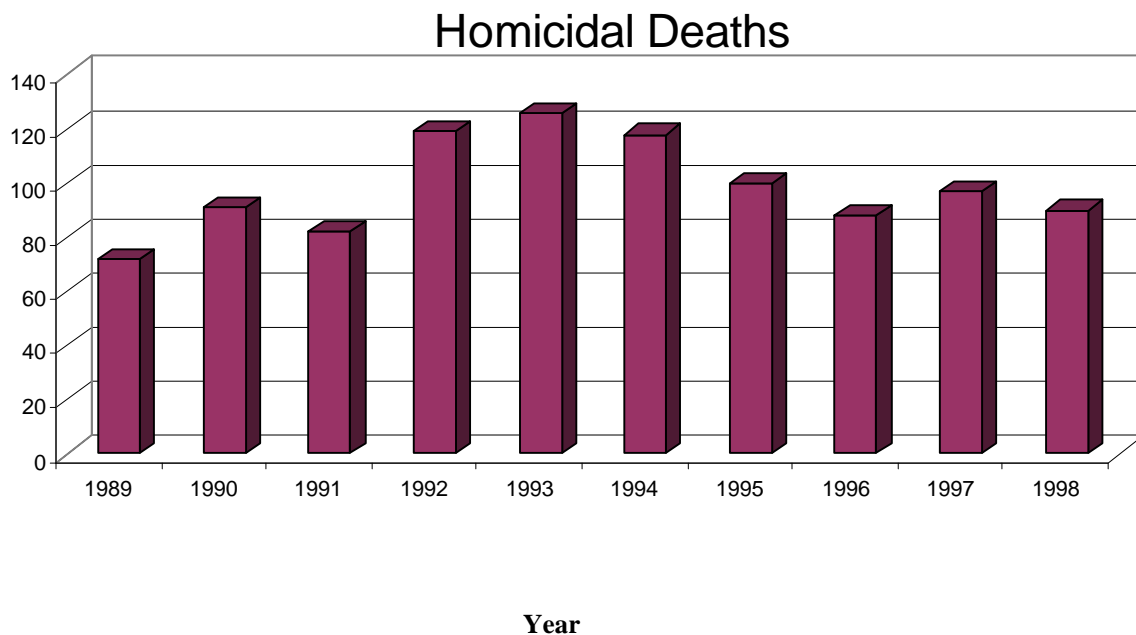


Table 2-3 A Ten-Year Perspective of Homicidal Methods

METHOD USED	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
	# (%)	# (%)	# (%)	# (%)	# (%)	# (%)	# (%)	# (%)	# (%)	# (%)
Blunt Impact	5 (7)	12 (13)	15 (18)	19 (16)	9 (7)	14 (12)	12 (12)	11 (13)	16 (16)	10 (11)
Firearms ³	41 (57)	48 (53)	38 (46)	64 (54)	90 (71)	79 (67)	58 (58)	51 (58)	52 (54)	55 (61)
Homicidal Violence ⁴	2 (3)	4 (4)	4 (5)	0 (0)	3 (2)	0 (0)	1 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Stabbing	17 (24)	21 (23)	15 (18)	22 (18)	17 (13)	16 (14)	16 (16)	15 (17)	14 (14)	15 (16)
Strangulation	3 (4)	2 (2)	2 (2)	6 (5)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	3 (3)	6 (6)	5 (6)
Other	5 (6)	4 (4)	8 (10)	8 (7)	5 (4)	6 (5)	9 (9)	8 (10)	9 (9)	5 (6)
Total	72	91	82	119	126	118	100	88	97	90

Graph 2-2 Homicides, 1989- 1998

³It is notable that the increase in homicides in 1992, 1993 and 1994 corresponds to an increase in the number and percentage of firearm homicides.

⁴The category of Homicidal Violence includes, but is not limited to, skeletal remains. The cases are recorded in the year and month of discovery rather than using the actual date of death, which may have occurred in a prior year. In past years, this category has included those considered victims in the Green River serial murder investigation. See a more complete discussion in the section on Homicides, page 41.

Table 2-4 A Ten Year Perspective of Suicidal Injury Modes

INJURY MODE	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Carbon Monoxide	9	24	16	15	18	9	15	16	14	14
Drowning	6	5	1	4	0	2	1	1	4	3
Drugs/Poisons	34	39	30	40	30	24	21	36	23	27
Firearms	103	100	100	96	125	128	108	112	99	95
Hanging	20	23	23	27	23	30	38	39	28	37
Jumping	16	10	12	10	8	13	15	17	11	9
Plastic Bag	7	6	4	8	4	4	6	6	3	5
Stabbing	7	3	0	3	4	3	6	3	5	3
Other	4	6	11	5	4	3	8	8	1	8
Total	217	216	197	208	216	216	218	238	188	201

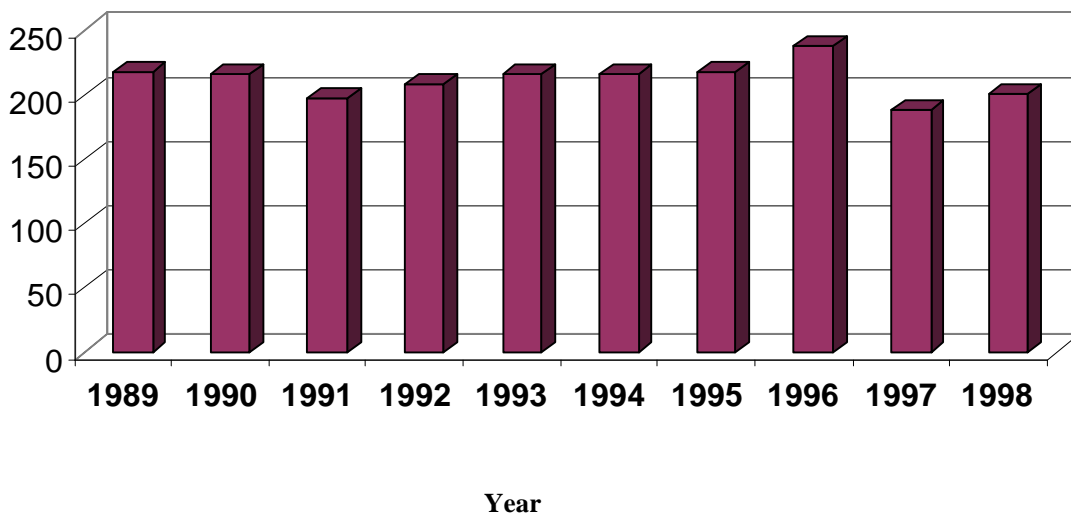
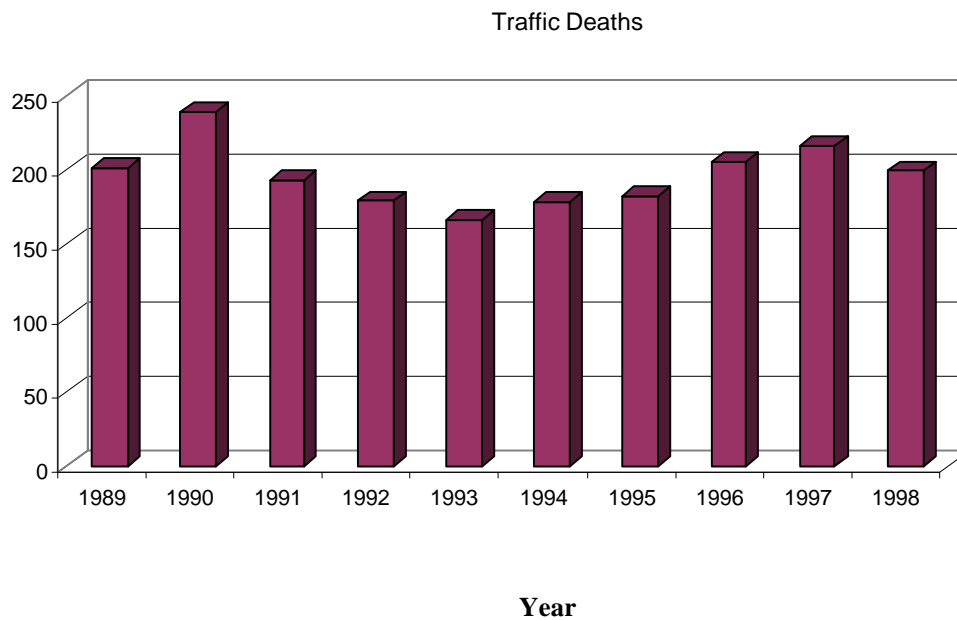
Graph 2-3 Suicides, 1989 - 1998**Suicidal Deaths**

Table 2-5 A Ten Year Perspective of Traffic Fatality Circumstances

CIRCUMSTANCES	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Auto Driver ⁵	96	109	97	81	73	77	80	102	88	85
Auto Passenger	33	61	42	44	49	38	39	39	58	47
Bicyclist	4	9	1	4	4	6	7	4	9	6
Motorcycle Driver	22	18	17	15	12	10	10	13	14	18
Motorcycle Passenger	2	2	0	1	1	3	1	2	2	2
Pedestrian	44	40	35	34	27	39	45	42	39	40
Other	0	0	1	0	0	5	0	3	6	1
Total	201	239	193	179	166	178	182	205	216	199

Graph 2-4 Traffic Fatalities, 1989 – 1998

⁵Includes cars, trucks, buses, and vans.

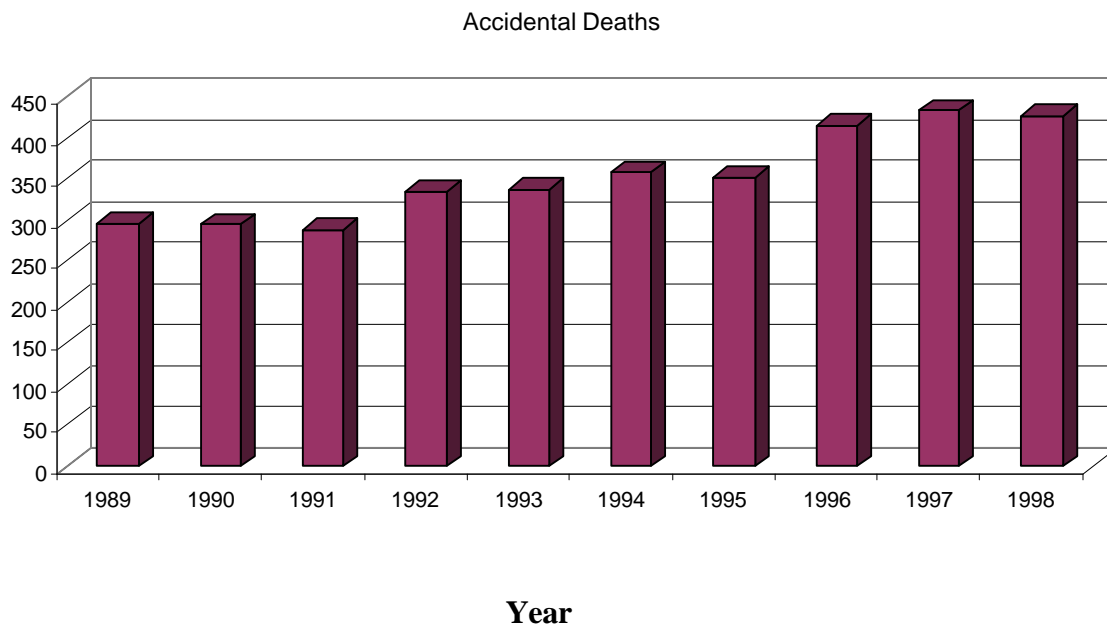
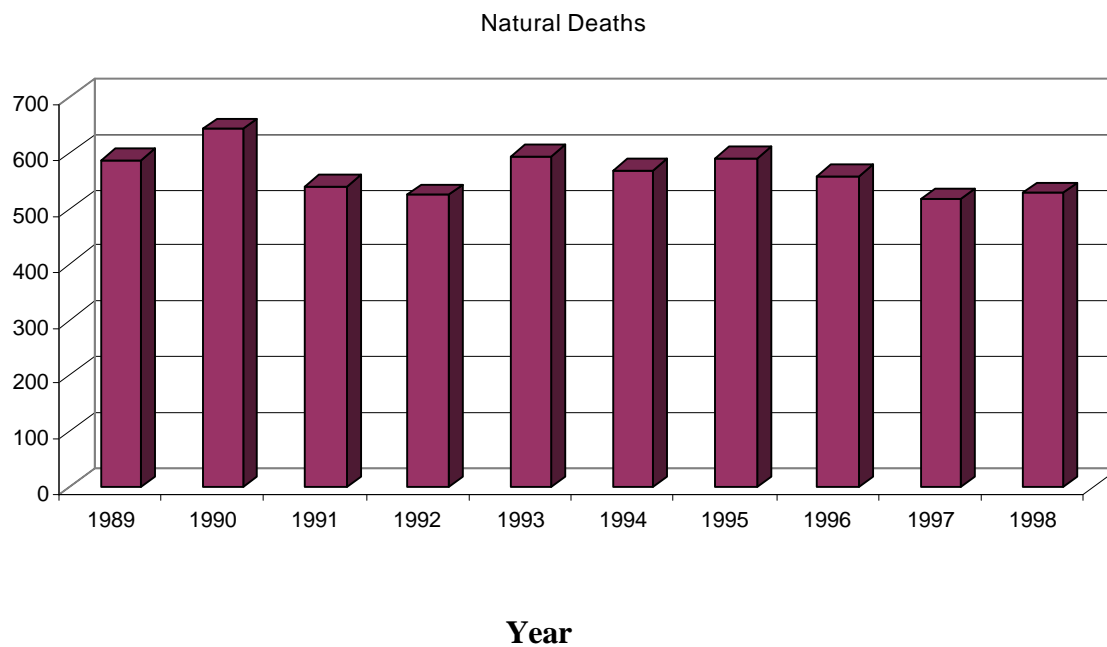
Table 2-6 A Ten Year Perspective of Accidental Death Circumstances

CIRCUMSTANCES	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Aircraft Accidents	8	1	4	11	3	1	8	2	3	1
Asphyxia ⁶	2	5	2	9	7	8	8	7	2	5
Aspiration of Foreign Body	2	2	3	5	1	4	3	3	5	4
Burns/fire	30	29	16	31	22	20	26	13	28	30
Complications of Therapy	11	14	12	14	5	7	9	2	9	11
Crush	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Carbon Monoxide	2	0	2	0	0	2	0	5	1	0
Drowning	18	29	30	27	24	22	22	27	34	25
Drugs/Poison	55	42	48	75	98	109	146	161	155	179
Electrocution	0	2	1	0	2	2	1	2	0	1
Explosion	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2
Falls	125	131	134	130	133	146	101	136	166	139
Firearms ⁷	5	2	2	3	2	0	1	0	1	0
Hanging	2	5	1	2	0	4	2	2	1	0
Hypothermia	2	2	2	0	1	0	1	6	3	5
Non-traffic Vehicle	6	4	2	4	8	4	7	5	7	2
Struck by Objects ⁸	8	10	5	10	9	10	7	13	8	9
Other	20	16	24	14	21	19	10	31	8	12
Total	296	294	288	335	337	358	352	415	434	427

⁶Starting in 1992, compression and traumatic asphyxia were combined into one category.

⁷Firearm deaths are classified accidental when the scene and circumstances of a self-inflicted wound demonstrate that a firearm discharged as a chance happening with no intention of injury on the part of the victim. Prior to 1989, firearm deaths where the person discharging the firearm was less than 16 years of age were generally viewed as accidental. As of 1989 the age limit was changed to 13.

⁸Accidents in this category were primarily construction or industrial accidents, boating related accidents, and pedestrians struck by trains.

Graph 2-5 Accidental Deaths, 1989-1998**Graph 2-6 Natural Deaths, 1989 - 1998**

Graph 2-7 Deaths of Undetermined Manner, 1989 - 1998